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Ruby told doctor of 'plot' to kill Kennedy

By Peter Watson

DOCUMENTS sent to The Sunday Times appear to throw new light on the role of Jack Ruby after the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963. Ruby was the night-club owner who shot dead Lee Harvey Oswald—the man arrested as Kennedy's assassin—as Oswald was being transferred from the Dallas police department two days after the assassination.

The documents are a report of a series of confidential psychiatric examinations carried out on Ruby while he was in Dallas County Jail in 1965. At that time he had already been sentenced to death for Oswald's murder. But his lawyers—concerned about Ruby's mental health — had arranged for a "competency hearing" early in 1966 to try to persuade the court that Ruby had never been well enough to stand trial and therefore should not have been sentenced to death.

Ruby died from lung cancer in early 1966 before this hearing could take place, but there was time for the psychiatric examinations. For the past nine years medical ethics have kept the report confidential and even last week, Dr Werner Teuter declined to comment on his report.

Throughout the interviews, according to the documents, Ruby maintained that he had been part of a plot to kill Kennedy. Even at the time of the interviews, says Dr Teuter, professor of psychiatry at the Loyola University in Chicago, Ruby was behaving as though he was still part of a conspiracy, so much so that Dr Teuter eventually concluded that he was a paranoiac schizophrenic.

Ruby told Dr Teuter that the reason he went to the Dallas police department on the morning he shot Oswald was that he had received "a phone-call from Fort Worth." Previously he had always maintained that he went there "on an impulse."

He told Dr Teuter that if he wanted to understand the Kennedy assassination he should read a book by Thomas Buchanan, Who Killed Kennedy?

Buchanan's book, published in May 1964 presented the theory that two assasins shot Kennedy—one from behind in the Texas book depository and one from under a bridge in front of the presidential car. He also argued that Oswald's part in the plot was merely to smuggle one of the murder weapons into the book depository where he was a genuine employee and that Ruby was detailed to kill Oswald so that Oswald, an obvious misfit, could more easily be made the scapegoat. Underlying the whole plot, according to Buchanan, was a conspiracy of Texan oil interests who feared that Kennedy was about to curb their special tax interests.

In some respects, Ruby was clearly mentally ill. "There were silences during the interviews, when Ruby would hold his head in his hands and would carefully listen to incidental noises, such as the squeaking of a door or the shuffling of feet by other prison inmates. Moving his chair somewhat, he would then look at me with a mournful expression and say, 'Do you hear crying?' He was convinced that Jewish women and children were being slaughtered right there and then." At other times he confessed that he felt, "They are trying to make another Dreyfus out of me" (referring to the Jewish French captain who in the 1880s was convicted of high treason but later proved innocent).

Dr Teuter concludes: "There are, of course, many islands of reality left in Ruby, as is so frequently the case in his particular illness. . . . He relates well about his early development and other circumstances available from the Warren report [the official inquiry]. He avidly reads the newspapers every day and carried on a reasonable conversation as long as he or others avoid his sensitive areas where the mental illness is located: anti-semitism, the murder of Oswald and the conspiracy regarding the presidential assassination."

Conspiracy theorists will find it strangely convenient that Dr Teuter should have found Ruby sane except for his views about Kennedy's killing, the more so as although Dr Teuter concluded that Ruby was not fit to stand trial because of his unbalanced ideas about the assassination, Ruby's last words to him were: "I do not want to die. But I am not insane. I was framed to kill Oswald."